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RUEHBL/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 1392  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 2864  
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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3855  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1237  
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CINCEUR FOR POLAD

BRUSSELS FOR USEC

E. O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PREL, MOPS, IS, LE, XF  
SUBJECT: RABIN REVIEWS WEST BANK POLICY, LEBANON,  
- AND OTHER MIDEAST ISSUES WITH CODEL MATHIAS

1. (C) - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY

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IN A WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES  
WITH CODEL MATHIAS FEBRUARY 20, DEFENSE MINISTER  
YITZHAK RABIN SAID THAT ISRAEL'S POLICY IS TO  
INCREASE THE ROLE OF ARAB RESIDENTS IN THE WEST BANK  
AND GAZA IN RUNNING THEIR DAY-TO-DAY MUNICIPAL  
AFFAIRS. ISRAEL IS ALSO COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE  
QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE TERRITORIES BUT WILL NOT  
COMPROMISE ON FIGHTING TERROR. RABIN BEMOANED THE  
FACT THAT WEST BANKERS AND GAZANS DID NOT SEIZE THE  
LEADERSHIP AND NEGOTIATE THEIR OWN FUTURE. ON  
LEBANON, RABIN EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT RADICAL  
SHI'ITES WOULD EXECUTE AN ISRAELI SOLDIER HELD  
HOSTAGE AND DISMISSED UNIFIL AS AN INSIGNIFICANT  
FACTOR. RABIN ALSO STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF  
IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AS A FIRST STEP IN  
THE PEACE PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

3. AUTONOMY IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

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RESPONDING TO SENATOR MATHIAS' QUESTION ABOUT DEVOLUTION OF GOVERNING AUTHORITY IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, RABIN SAID THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WANTED TO LET THE ARAB RESIDENTS RUN THEIR OWN DAILY LOCAL AFFAIRS. ISRAEL IS ALSO COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, BUT WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT TERROR WITHOUT COMPROMISE.

4. RABIN SAID THAT THE "REAL PROBLEM" IS THAT THE ARABS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA CANNOT COME FORWARD WITH THEIR OWN LEADERSHIP TO NEGOTIATE ON THEIR FUTURE. HE BLAMED THE ARAB WORLD FOR BRANDING THE ARABS FROM THE TERRITORIES AS "ILLEGITIMATE" NEGOTIATORS BECAUSE THEY ARE UNDER OCCUPATION. ANY WEST BANKER OR GAZAN WHO NEGOTIATED ALONE WOULD SURELY SUFFER ATTACKS, RABIN SAID.

5. RABIN SAID THAT THE BULK OF THE POPULATION OF THE TERRITORIES DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN TERROR, AND THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE IN PRACTICAL TERMS SHOULD BE IMPROVED. HE SAW NO CONTRADICTION IN ANTI-TERROR EFFORTS AT THE SAME TIME. OTHER GOALS THAT RABIN NOTED WERE MORE EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION OF MUNICIPALITIES IN THE TERRITORIES AND MORE ARAB MAYORS. HE STATED THAT ISRAEL WAS TRYING TO FIND MAYORS WHO WERE ALSO ACCEPTABLE TO JORDAN AND IT "TAKES TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT PERSON." RABIN ALSO STATED THAT ISRAEL WAS PREPARED TO HAND OVER RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION OF THE TERRITORIES TO ARAB RESIDENTS. HE MENTIONED AN ARAB DOCTOR WHO RECENTLY WAS APPOINTED TO HEAD THE HEALTH SERVICE OF THE CIVAD. RABIN, WHO HAD MET WITH THE DOCTOR RECENTLY, SAID HE WAS A VERY GOOD MAN AND BLAMED THE JORDANIANS FOR NOT SUPPORTING HIS APPOINTMENT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

6. RABIN ALSO EXPRESSED ISRAEL'S SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN THE TERRITORIES. HE NOTED THAT BOTH JORDAN AND ISRAELI BUREAUCRATS AND BUSINESSMEN HAD RESISTED CERTAIN PROJECTS, BUT MOST HAD BEEN APPROVED. RABIN STRESSED THAT HE OPPOSED THE WITHDRAWAL OF IDF TROOPS FROM CITIES IN THE TERRITORIES BECAUSE ISRAEL WOULD BE FORCED TO SEND TROOPS BACK IN WITH LIKELY BLOODSHED.

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7. LEBANON

RABIN TOLD SENATOR MATHIAS THAT THE TWO ISRAELI SOLDIERS WERE KIDNAPPED BY "THE SAME ORGANIZATION" THAT BOMBED THE U. S. AND FRENCH EMBASSIES IN BEIRUT, THE MARINE COMPOUND, AND ISRAEL'S FORMER MILITARY HEADQUARTERS IN TYRE. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT RADICAL SHI'ITES WOULD INDEED CARRY OUT THEIR THREAT TO EXECUTE A SOLDIER. ASKED ABOUT UNIFIL'S ROLE IN SOUTH LEBANON, RABIN DESCRIBED IT AS "LIKE A FACTOR THAT DOESN'T EXIST." WITH NO AUTHORITY TO DETAIN ANYONE, NO INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITY, AND NO TANKS, THEY WERE FACING A "MISSION IMPOSSIBLE." REPEATING HIS PREVIOUSLY STATED POSITION RABIN SAID THAT ISRAEL IS NOT DEMANDING UNIFIL'S WITHDRAWAL AND IT IS NOT ASKING UNIFIL TO STAY.

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## 8. REGIONAL MILITARY BALANCE

REFERRING TO THE "TREMENDOUS ACCUMULATION" OF ARMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, RABIN DESCRIBED SYRIA AND LIBYA AS KEYS FOR SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE REGION. HE REVIEWED THE SOVIET ROLE IN EQUIPPING AND IMPROVING SYRIA'S MILITARY SINCE JUNE 1982. NOTING THAT SYRIA IS THE MOST SERIOUS POTENTIAL MILITARY THREAT FOR ISRAEL, RABIN UNDERScoreD THE INCREASE IN SYRIAN TROOPS AND ARMOR. THE REGIONAL ARMS RACE PUTS A "HEAVY BURDEN" ON ISRAEL, HE SAID, AND ISRAEL'S DEFENSE CUTS WERE TROUBLESOME. REFERRING TO CUTS THIS FISCAL YEAR IN U. S. MILITARY AID, RABIN SAID THAT ISRAEL UNDERSTOOD IT BUT COULD "NOT SAY WE'RE HAPPY" ABOUT IT.

## 9. IRAN AND IRAQ -- THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE REGION

REACTING TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR, RABIN INDICATED IT WAS IN ISRAEL'S INTEREST THAT THE WAR CONTINUE WITHOUT A CLEAR WINNER. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD GO ON AS LONG AS KHOMEINI IS ALIVE. ASKED SPECIFICALLY HOW THE U. S. MIGHT IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH IRAN, RABIN OFFERED THREE THOUGHTS: (1) TRY TO AVOID A VEHEMENTLY ANTI-IRAN IMAGE, (2) KEEP LINES OPEN TO AS MANY IRANIANS AS POSSIBLE, AND (3) WAIT FOR TIME TO HAVE ITS EFFECT. RABIN NOTED THAT IRAN'S ONLY SUCCESS IN EXPORTING ITS BRAND OF FUNDAMENTALISM HAD BEEN LEBANON, AND ISRAEL SUFFERED BECAUSE OF IT. RABIN SAID THAT IRAN SPENDS ONE MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR SUPPORTING SHI'ITES IN LEBANON, AND HE NOTED FREQUENT VISITS BY LEBANESE SHI'ITE RELIGIOUS LEADERS, INCLUDING THE "MODERATES," TO IRAN.

## 10. THE PEACE PROCESS

RABIN SAID HE FELT THAT AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP IN THE PEACE PROCESS WAS STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH EGYPT. NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH EGYPT, HE ADDED, WAS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THIS PROCESS.

11. CODEL DID NOT SEE THIS MESSAGE BEFORE DEPARTURE.

12. MINIMIZE BEIRUT CONSIDERED. PICKERING

END OF MESSAGE

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